

**Briefing Note – Purple Haze Mineral Extraction  
Planning Application submitted by Grundon  
Strategic Planning Committee – Thursday 27 May 2021**

Thank you Chairman for allowing me to address the committee this morning regarding the Dorset Council response to the HCC Consultation on the Grundon planning application for mineral extraction just a few hundred metres over the Dorset Hampshire border close to the Town of Verwood.

I am here this morning representing Cllrs Toni Coombs, Simon Gibson and myself as the three Dorset Councillors representing the Verwood Ward. I need to make absolutely clear that mineral extraction at this location will have a lasting and damaging impact on the lives of Verwood residents. During the initial HCC Consultation there was reference to this being in a quote... remote location. Such an ill-informed comment should not go unanswered, and it hasn't. I speak for my colleagues in Verwood. We are outraged. This location is adjacent to Verwood with a population of over 14,700 residents and MVCP which attracts over 1.0m visitors each year. Remote I don't think so.

We welcome the officer suggested response to the consultation but we are not sure the basis for objection is strong enough. I refer specifically to the impact on the hydrology and the suggestion that measures to 'mitigate' need to be strengthened.

During the Public Inquiry some 9 years ago, which I attended and spoke on two occasions, it was noted by the Planning Inspector that a number of the environmental concerns would have to be dealt with at the planning application stage.

Despite the inclusion of the Purple Haze site remaining in the Minerals and Waste Plan; the presumption was that permission should not be granted unless the applicant can offer an absolute assurance that there would be no negative impact on the integrity of European protected sites. There are continuing concerns of detrimental impact on the hydrology which would be very damaging to the delicate ecosystem of the internationally designated Ebblake Bog SSSI [part of the Dorset Heathland, SPA, SAC, Ramsar], which is about 520 metres away from the Purple Haze site.

We are advised that the minerals are very similar to Blue Haze, which is across the road coming from the same ancient riverbed. These will be of similar poor quality and would require on-site washing before being used for their stated purpose. Should the soft sand be taken off site without washing it could only be suitable for landscaping rather than the building industry use as defined in the Plan and not for construction.

This therefore raises serious concerns about how any contractor could offer an absolute guarantee against any adverse impact on the hydrology of the immediate area and Ebblake Bog. Mitigation of harm will simply not do. Case law supports this.

We are aware that two key issues were deferred to the planning process, namely the question of whether the mineral was above or below the water table and should the mineral require on site washing what mitigation would be introduced to ensure that the integrity of the acid mire that is Ebblake Bog would remain unaffected. I understand that only three bore hole samples have been taken. The Purple Haze site stretches about 3 miles along the B3081. This has to be seen as a token gesture surely and entirely inadequate to establish a clear understanding of this vitally important matter.

This will require the protection of the water quality and re-charge of the underlying aquifer, groundwater and the surface water. We can find no evidence that the application takes any mitigation into account. There must be a very strong and compelling case for the

Precautionary Principle to be rigorously applied, given the environmental sensitivities at this location.

In addition to the disruption to groundwater hydrology there is also an issue of sediment. Practical experience of this problem has found that it is not possible to prevent sediment run-off from mineral/landfill sites as the operation creates much bare ground that is readily erodible, and intense rainfall events invariably occur and overwhelm sediment capture measures (and particularly so when they are not adequately maintained).

There is also a serious concern about the impact caused by Silica dust which is harmful when inhaled into your lungs. As it is 100 times smaller than a grain of sand, you can be breathing it in without knowing. Exposure to silica dust can lead to the development of lung cancer, silicosis (an irreversible scarring and stiffening of the lungs), kidney disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. This is a particularly important consideration given the close proximity of MVCP and a large housing development on the eastern border of Verwood.

We are reassured by the reference to the CJEU judgement in the case of People Over Wind established a legal precedent that mitigation cannot be taken into account when considering the screening test for Likely Significant Effects. To take account of mitigation effects at the screening stage presupposes that there will be likely significant effects on the European sites therefore there is a requirement for an Appropriate Assessment (AA) to be carried out by the competent authority. However, when the assessment is carried out, the Court said that the AA, 'may not have any gaps and must contain complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions capable of removing all reasonable doubt as to the effects of the proposed works.' Furthermore, it throws into question the legality of many strategic mitigation systems that have been put in place to protect sites such as the Dorset Heaths.

We are by no means experts in this but looking at Ecology By Design's scoping report there seems to be a wide range of issues and to suddenly conclude that there will be no likely significant effects seems a huge stretch to us on such an enormous scale, based as it is on a massive assumption which lacks any substantive justification based on any form of scientific analysis.

We fail to see that bullet point 10 under Development Considerations of the Hampshire Minerals & Waste Plan (2013) has been acknowledged sufficiently within the submission, being the 'protection of the amenity of Verwood residents.' Bullet point 4 of said Plan also has not been sufficiently addressed. Where is the reassurance of the protection and enhancement of amenities as required to be compliant with the Development Plan?

This application is a weak submission that is liable to legal challenge. It has failed to adequately address the measures required by the Inspector at examination stage and the matters needed for consideration in the Hampshire Minerals & Waste Plan (2013).

The three Verwood Ward Councilors remain entirely unconvinced that suitable environmental impact mitigation applying the precautionary principle would be introduced to protect the integrity of the Ebblake Bog -Acid Mire SSI and Ramsar which are Internationally important designations.

We therefore ask that the committee supports the recommendation to **OBJECT** to this planning application for the extraction of minerals at the site known as Purple Haze for the reasons set out above, and to strengthen the reasons to include an absolute assurance regarding there being NO harm to the ecology of the area. Mitigation can only be interpreted as a reduction in harm not a safeguard against harm.

Thank you Chairman